

## CLOTHING STRIKERS FIGHT AMERICANISM

Foreign Element Carries Its  
War to Personal Attack on  
a Pershing Hero.

LEGION BADGE BANNED

Aliens Versus Natives of U.  
Is Battle Alignment in  
Garment Trade.

RUSSIAN SOCIALISTS LEAD

Amalgamated Is Determined  
to Destroy United Workers  
by All Means Possible.

This is the third of the series  
of articles of THE NEW YORK HERALD  
analyzing the industrial cloth-  
ing situation in New York. The  
articles will be continued through-  
out the week.

"You can't be a good Amalgamated  
worker and at the same time belong  
to the American Legion."

This is the decree which returning  
war veterans, members of the Amal-  
gamated, heard when they sought to  
recover their jobs after their discharge  
from the army.

One of the chief arguments put for-  
ward by the leaders of the Amal-  
gamated Clothing Workers Union when  
they demanded the reduction of the  
working week to forty-four hours was  
that in this way when members of  
the Amalgamated who had been  
drafted for war service returned to  
look for their jobs there would be  
more jobs open due to the smaller  
amount of work accomplished by each  
worker in the shorter week.

Here is the experience of a returned  
Amalgamated veteran, Bernard Cohen,  
who fought in the Argonne, on the  
Meuse and through St. Mihiel. He re-  
ceived his discharge April 1, 1919, and  
after joining Meade Post of the Ameri-  
can Legion—he was a sergeant in the  
First Field Artillery, Twenty-seventh  
Division—decided to go back to his  
old job as a cutter in his brother-in-  
law's tailor shop at 517 Broadway, the  
Matchless Specialty Company, run by  
Sol Cedar & Sons.

Cohen, who had volunteered for ser-  
vice before he was called in the draft,  
found quite a little trouble in getting  
back his working card from the Amal-  
gamated Cutters Local 44, to which he  
belonged. When he got the card, his  
button showing his membership in the  
American Legion was pointed out at.

"You'll have to get rid of that," he  
was told. When he ignored the order  
he found himself up on trivial charges  
before the shop chairman. Finally he  
was taken to task by one of the business  
agents of the union, who met him in the  
hallway of the building.

"Take off that button," he was told.  
"If you don't you can't work. You  
can't be a good Amalgamated worker  
and at the same time belong to the  
American Legion."

"Why not?" inquired Cohen.  
"Never mind why," was the answer.  
"Choose between the Legion and your  
job. First thing you know I suppose  
you'd be out shooting us down, your  
own brothers in the union, if you were  
told to. Don't let me see that button  
about you again and keep away from  
the Legion or you'll get hurt."

Cohen, who is the sole support of a  
crippled mother and helpless father,  
chose to keep his job, and dropped the  
Legion, for, he says, he knew the Amal-  
gamated meant business when he got  
this warning from the business agent.  
Now, since the strike, he has been work-  
ing despite orders to quit the job and in  
consequence has been attacked three  
times, the last time at noon on Monday  
last in the hallway of the building,  
where he was pointed out by a walking  
delegate as a "scab" and hit on the  
head with a wrench. Seven stitches were  
taken in his scalp. His assailant es-  
caped, but the walking delegate was ar-  
rested and held for examination next  
week in Essex Market Court.

This incident is related as throwing

some legal light on the methods of the  
Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union  
in its drive when the issue is clearly  
drawn between the union and anything  
American. There are many patriotic  
members of the union, without question,  
but there is an element within the organ-  
ization that stands only for "international"  
things and not for "national."

Prior to the organization of the Amal-  
gamated Clothing Workers of America,  
in 1912, the men's clothing industry had  
been, so far as it was unionized at all,  
controlled by the United Garment  
Workers of America, an American Fed-  
eration of Labor organization. The cut-  
ters, for the most part American born  
and English speaking, were the domi-  
nating element in this union.

The rank and file were the tailors and  
machine operators, mostly immigrants  
Russian, Polish and Lithuanian Jews,  
with a fair sprinkling of Italians. Few  
of them could speak or read English.  
In consequence, a sense of distance and  
inequality arose between the cutters,  
"inside" workers, and the others, or "out-  
side" workers, in the sweatshops. Grad-  
ually they came to be looked upon and  
called themselves, respectively, the  
"American" and the "foreign" or "Jew"  
elements in the industry.

This sense of disparity and social in-  
feriority was seized upon by the intel-  
ligent leaders among the tailors, who  
had been revolutionists or anarchists in  
Russia, as a lever for arousing discon-  
tent. They were taught that the United  
Garment Workers was an organization  
dominated by "Americans who had built  
up a corrupt labor union bureaucracy,"  
Joseph Schlossberg, one of the found-  
ers of the Amalgamated and its general  
secretary and treasurer since it was or-  
ganized, describes this situation in his  
"Documentary History of the Amal-  
gamated Clothing Workers of America,"  
printed by the union for circulation  
among its members.

"To the Russian immigrant," he says,  
"the situation was a reproduction in  
miniature of Russia with her Czaristic  
bureaucracy and oppressed people. There  
was no hope without a fundamental  
change."

"When the cutters, Americans,"  
Schlossberg says, "were ready to assume  
the responsibility of officiating a na-  
tional organization of clothing workers,  
we were grateful to them and happy in  
the thought that the new born body  
would be led by Americans—Americans  
with experience and idealism."

"We found that we were heartlessly  
deceived. Our loyalty and enthusiasm  
were exploited for the purpose of build-  
ing up a corrupt labor union bureau-  
cracy to reduce the American standard  
of living, which, for us, was the sweatshop  
with its unsanitary conditions, long  
hours, short pay and all their evil ac-  
companiments."

To overcome this condition and elimi-  
nate the "American" element, as it was  
called, meant organization. This was  
carried on with the help of a large num-  
ber of young Russians who had drifted  
over here after the unsuccessful revolu-

tion against the Czar in 1905. Of them  
Schlossberg says:

"They were a most valuable acqui-  
sition (in the clothing industry). Their  
influence upon our movement was tre-  
mendous. They revitalized our forces.  
Unlike the earlier immigrants, these ex-  
iles brought with them excellent train-  
ing in theory and practice, received in  
the revolutionary movement."

Birth of the Foreign Faction.

Out of this "revitalization" grew the  
internal organization of the "foreign"  
element—the tailors, operators and  
others who were taught to be conscious  
of a class inferiority in their relations  
with the cutters and leaders of the  
United Garment Workers. When the  
regular biennial convention of the  
United was approaching at Nashville,  
Tenn., in 1914, a "conference" of these  
discontented forces was created in New  
York, "somewhat similar," Schlossberg  
says, "to the Committee of Correspond-  
ence of the revolutionary colonists."

The "American" element refused to  
permit the "conference" leaders to partici-  
pate in the convention. The great  
European war had just begun, and fiery  
socialistic proposals were hurled at the  
men in control of the convention. When  
the "foreign" element had been excluded  
they adjourned to another hall and there  
organized a rump convention, at which  
the famous preamble to the Amal-  
gamated constitution was formulated. A  
little later, having been definitely re-  
jected by the American Federation of  
Labor, to whom they appealed, these  
militant exponents of industrial union-  
ism organized under their present title  
of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers  
of America. Ever since they have  
waged a relentless war upon the United  
Garment Workers, and to-day have suc-  
ceeded to a great extent in destroying  
that organization as an effective union  
of men's clothing workers in New York  
city. The United is to-day practically a  
dead letter.

The old "American" element is no  
longer in control of the industry, even  
though many of the workers to-day are  
American born, children of the first im-  
migrants, of whom Schlossberg says:

"To those people the sweatshop was  
America. They were excellent objects  
of exploitation and the sweatshop re-  
ceived them with open arms."

Schlossberg, in his "Documentary His-  
tory," tells of this socialistic evolution  
thus:

"To the American labor movement, as  
to all others," he says, "we were just  
human rubbish, trash. We were cheap  
labor from eastern Europe, come here  
to reduce the American standard of  
living, which, for us, was the sweatshop  
with its unsanitary conditions, long  
hours, short pay and all their evil ac-  
companiments."

The Socialists were the only ones  
who helped us. None others come to  
us. Yet we have been denounced for

the Socialist sympathies of our organ-  
ization. If it is wrong for our union  
to have a Socialist education, the blame  
for that must be laid at the door of  
those who had cruelly estranged us  
while the Socialists gave us the best  
they had to offer."

In 1918 the United Garment Workers  
still boasted of a membership through-  
out the country of 65,000, but its ranks  
have been greatly depleted since then.  
Everywhere the Amalgamated has  
reached it has operated as a "militant"  
organization and has sought and suc-  
ceeded in obtaining mastery of the field.  
Concessions have been made to outside  
manufacturers, such as permitting piece  
work, allowing wage cuts and adding  
strictly by all rulings of the "impartial  
chairman," or arbitrator, named in the  
yearly agreements even when against  
the union—concessions which the New  
York manufacturers often have de-  
manded and as often have been refused.

In consequence the men's clothing  
trade throughout all the East and West  
and States is now almost wholly in the  
grasp of the Amalgamated, and every  
one of its workers is assessed to main-  
tain the burden of the strike in New  
York.

To-morrow's article in THE NEW  
YORK HERALD on the big clothing  
strike will show the criminal extremes  
to which the strikers go in raiding shops,  
destroying property and maiming  
workers.

Sites for Incinerator Plants.  
John P. Lee, Commissioner of Street  
Cleaning, yesterday assigned inspec-  
tors to find sites on vacant city owned  
land for the erection of three inciner-  
ator plants, appropriation of \$2,000,000  
for which was made recently by the  
Board of Estimate. The Commissioner  
said the plants would save the city  
about \$550,000 annually in charges for  
towing refuse to sea.

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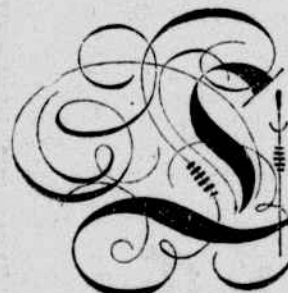
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